

**SCPD EMPLOYMENT FIRST OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 12, 2019
SMYRNA STATE SERVICE CENTER, SMYRNA**

Present: Cindy Sterling, Chair, ServiceSource/AND; Sandy Reyes, Co-Chair, Department of Human Resources; Elisabeth Furber, CLASI/DLP; Jennifer Garcia, DDDS (Designee for Marissa Catalan); Thomas Hall, DSS Deputy Director/DHSS; Dale Matusevich, DOE; Lloyd Schmitz, Council on Blind/SCPD; Jackeline Saez-Rosario, Advocate; Kyle Hodges, SCPD Staff; and Amber Rivard, Support Staff.

Guests: Deb Bradl, DVI/DHSS; and Cynthia Fairwell DOL/DVR, VR District Administrator for Employment Services.

Absent: Andrea Guest, DVR; Emmanuel Jenkins, DDC; Rick Kosmalski, DDC; Julie Petroff, DOL-Division of Industrial Affairs (DIA); and Ron Sarg, DCVA/MOAA.

CALL TO ORDER/Introductions/Approval of January 8, 2019 Minutes

Cindy called the meeting to order at 9:59 am. Everyone introduced themselves. The January 8th, 2019 minutes were reviewed. Dale motioned for approval of the January minutes. Lloyd seconded the motion. The January 8th minutes were approved as submitted.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Additions:

1. Cindy added that if time allowed that everyone provide an update with what is happening in their divisions that is related to employment.

BUSINESS

DE Employer Tax Credit – Cynthia Fairwell

Kyle had contacted and invited Cynthia to the meeting to discuss more on the Employer Tax Credit for Hiring Individuals with Disabilities. There was a flyer (handouts) explaining about the Employer Tax Credit. Cynthia introduced herself.

She stated that the Employer Tax Credit has been in existence for two years, but has not been known to many. It came into existence from Senator Poore having discussion with other individuals about the tax credit being needed in Delaware. It is an incentive for employers to hire people with disabilities. It is similar to the Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) Tax Credit, and it is being disseminated through the Department of Finance in Delaware (DOF). DOF holds the funding for the tax credit. The Employer Tax Credit is unlimited on the number of hires. If an employer is interested, they need to work with a person with disabilities and must come from DVR or DVI. The Employer Tax Credit gives the business up to 10% of the person's

wages up to \$1,500 for two consecutive years as long as that person is working 185 days or more.

Cindy stated that the new Delaware Employer Tax Credit become effective on January 1, 2019. She recently gave this information to her staff. The information goes back to January 1, 2019. Kyle asked for confirmation on the tax credit providing qualified employers up to \$1,500 for each individual referred and hired from either of the mentioned State agencies for two consecutive years. Cynthia clarified Kyle's question, and added that if a person wanted to work part-time hours while earning \$8,000 per year, then it would be 10% of that \$8,000 (up to \$1,500 per year). Cynthia added that the employer does not have to fill out any paperwork, but whoever is working with the employer, should receive the employer's name and the individual's name. That information should be sent over to DVR who forwards to DOF. Cynthia added that the tracking will be done through DVR providing the names of the employer, and the individual throughout the tax credit process. After the 185 days, Cynthia's unit will be tracking all the information from DVR. Cindy asked how Cynthia will be keeping track after the 185 days. Cynthia stated that since Cindy's agency provides the 90-day placement, then after those 90 days, Cynthia's section will be able to view that ServiceSource, for example, placed this individual in employment. After 185 days, Cynthia's section will view an update from the employer seeing if the individual is still employed or not. If the individual is still employed, the information will go to DOF for data intake. Kyle asked if the 185 days meant working days or just 185 days in total. Cynthia will check on them.

Cynthia provided everyone with a packet that describes the State Code, Title 30 Chapter 20 B. Employer Tax Credit for Hiring Individuals with Disabilities. She added that they tell employers to maximize their employment to benefit from the tax credit. Lloyd asked if WOTC and the tax credit are similar, and asked how they would track the eligibility. Cynthia added that the eligibility for the WOTC is based on six months and it depends if an individual is a veteran or not. Kyle asked if the Commission could receive up-to-date information involving the tax credit that could be used for the Annual Report. Cynthia stated that other things could come from this tax credit. Lloyd asked if DVR counselors can start sharing the tax credit information to employers or not. Cynthia stated that she met with DVR's contractual vendor and gave the vendor all of DVR's information for the tax credit. They should have started marketing this to employers. Lloyd added that he would like to promote this and asked if he could post it. Cynthia agreed. She will send an email promoting this tax credit to Kyle or Amber to forward to the Commission for distribution. Kyle commented that this information and be posted on the SCPD website. Cynthia gather more information on the point of contact in her section and spread the word of the tax credit including sending the information to AND.

Questions for Baseline Data and Next Steps

Kyle stated that included in the handouts is a draft letter requesting baseline data from relevant State agencies. The relevant State agencies who serves people with disabilities DOE, DOL, DVR, DHSS, DSAMH, DSAAPD, DDDS, DSS, DSCYF, and DOC. Kyle had discussed with Rita about having basic questions on baseline data that should be asked of all the relevant State agencies through letter format. Another document incorporates the support plans. Kyle asked for

the Commission to review the questions used in the draft letter, to see if they are ok to use or need to be re-worded.

The Commission reviewed the questions and suggestions that were incorporated about each question:

- **Does your agency have a strategic plan that identifies measurable goals and objectives relative to promoting and achieving employment?** Dale stated that this question could be viewed from two different viewpoints in answering the question: 1) As an agency, do we have any measurable goals or objectives that relate to our own hiring practices? 2) What are the goals and objectives as far as working with students (DOE agency) with disabilities to have them employed? He added that he is fine with the wording of the question, but wanted to provide input. Kyle added that if Dale and he could work together, they could reword it so that the target is helping students with disabilities find employment. Cindy suggested that they put a header that states, **“These questions are related to the services you provide to facilitate employment for people with disabilities.”** Dale stated that it should be sent to the Directors rather than the Secretaries, and the Commission will receive the results they want. Lloyd stated that before sending it out, they should contact all of the relevant State agencies and find out who is the best point of contact for the baseline data.
- **Is your agency offering Employment First (EF)? If so, is EF being offered as the first option? If so, how many support plans document that EF is offered as the first option?** Dale asked if the question means how many IEPs an agency has relating to employment first. Cindy clarified that it does. Kyle added that the first round of letters is going to relevant State agencies and the second round will be addressing hiring practices. Cindy commented that the question should be left as is. Kyle asked which question would be better used. A Commission member stated that DSAMH does not use language such as support plans. They would rather call it a retreat plan. Kyle commented that it could be customized for each State agency. An example would be to word it as “plans supporting employment as a first option”. A member suggested that they could change it to support plans and give examples such as treatment plans, vocational plans, education plans, or transitional plans. Cindy asked what would be a generic term for support plans. **Kyle stated that it would be better to leave the question alone.**
- **What data, if any, does your agency compile on people with disabilities in your system that receive vocational supports? Please provide such data from your agency’s most recently completed fiscal year.** Cindy added that this question is alright in how it is drafted. Lloyd added that they should remind agencies that this baseline data is an annual request.
- **What vocational support and/or services are provided by your agency? In a fiscal year, how many individuals were served in the categories below? Please check all that apply.**
 - **Sheltered Workshops**
 - **Competitive Employment**
 - **Career Track Plans/Continuing or Higher Education**
 - **Other (please explain)**

There was discussion on this. Jennifer stated that if she was filling this letter out for DDDS, and she is looking at the question asking about sheltered workshops, DDDS does not have those workshops. DDDS has State operated day centers. DDDS contract with providers that provide sheltered workshops. Jennifer asked for clarification if that information would be included in the letter, and Cindy clarified that it would. Cindy added that they could have the sheltered workshops identified as facilitated employment. Kyle stated that he will add clarification to the question. Cindy and another Commission member added that **Kyle should add vocational training, employment assessment, pathways to employment, and Project Search**. Dale added that they should **include how many students are going through Career/Higher Education programs**. Everyone agreed with the wording of the question. Kyle reviewed who will be sent the letter: Mary Ann Mieczkowski (DOE), Andrea Guest (DVR), Elisha Jenkins (DVI), Elisabeth Romero cc: Greg Valentine and Susan Holloway (DSAMH), Dava Newnam (DSAAPD), Marie Nonnenmacher and cc: Marissa Catalon and Jennifer Garcia (DDDS), Ray Fitzgerald and cc: Thomas Hall (DSS). Kyle will contact Mark Richmond to see who to send it to at DOC, and the DSCYF.

- **What are the barriers your agency experiences in promoting and achieving meaningful and competitive employment?** No comments made.
- **Please identify any innovative ideas, best practices or partnerships your agency may have regarding the achievement of meaningful and competitive employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.** No comments made.

A member of the Commission added that the Title 19, Chapter 7, Subchapter V of the Delaware Code should have a link that take them straight to the Code. Kyle will re-draft the letter with the changes, and then forward to Cindy and Sandy (or the Commission) to review.

GACEC Presentation

Kyle commented that Dale was scheduled to present at the GACEC meeting in January, but the agenda was cancelled. Dale is scheduled to speak at the next meeting on March 19th. GACEC requested an overview/update on what the Commission is currently doing.

Additional Agenda Item: Commission Members Providing Updates Related to Employment from their Divisions

ServiceSource moved their location near Easter Seals in New Castle (Corporate Commons). ServiceSource collaborated with DDDS regarding changes going on with rate basing and transitioning individuals to the Medicaid Waiver by the end of June.

DHR (Department of Human Resources) is being restructured and Selective Placement should be reviewed by the Commission to revamp it. Lloyd commented that under the Full Council, Nick Fina had challenged us to look at the Selective Placement program, and had put together a conference call with Keith Hunt, Diversity Director. Keith had stated that they were coming up with some strategy plan to incorporate individuals with disabilities in State government. Keith added that they would be able to give the Full Council more information on the plan towards the end of February. Kyle asked Lloyd if he could follow up on this plan by March 1st. Lloyd agreed

to follow-up. Jane Hahn was also a part of the discussion, and is the Selective Placement person for DHR.

DOE developed an initiative that is called “Pipeline Career Success for Students with Disabilities.” It is a partnership between Special Education, Career and Tech Ed, DVI, and DVR. DOE is working with the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity in adopting one of their models that uses “non-traditional individuals” going into the workforce. Currently DOE is working with three high schools in the Appoquinimink, Capitol and Laurel school districts looking at data for students accessing Career and Tech Ed opportunities through the disability spectrum since fall 2018. There was a conference with the three high schools on February 11, 2019 that updated DOE that they were having talks with students about any career they may be interested in, and talking with businesses in the community about letting students work at their facilities. They worked with Lifespan Institute at Kansas University and the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education self-determination, self-advocacy skills, and teaching all students by having inclusive classrooms that began last fall. Mount Pleasant, Christiana and Dover high schools joined the initiative. The Life Span Institute received a three-year grant (only two and half years left). The work at Kansas University Life Span Institute is rallying more universities to become involved in potential partnerships. On February 22nd DOE will provide an update on the root causes of not allowing students with disabilities becoming involved in Tech Ed.

With the federal government shutdown, people were worried that Delaware DSS would shut down. Thomas clarified that eligible Delawareans would still receive their benefits. In addition, DSS was eliminating staggered payments. Thomas also noted that the division’s sites are doubling up on their food.

CLASI has a current project of medical legal partnerships that are funded through locations such as Christiana Care, and Connections that helps homeless veterans, Public Health that serves pregnant women, and development for several other partnerships with State agencies (not finalized yet). CLASI can provide non-traditional civil legal assistance to help with employment such as expungements, pardons, barriers to employment or improving health. Disability Law Program is targeting individuals receiving SSI or SSDI to maintain, regain or keep their employment.

Deb Bradl stated that she and Sandy Miller met with Brian Freedman from the University of Delaware about the changes in the CLSC (Career Life Study Certificate) or Edge extensions so that they can get more students involved from DVI into those programs. There is a student in Project Search and Sandy is working with one of the transitional counselors to create a relationship. Sandy and Deb are working on contracts with their vendors to create a pre-version of our competitive employment contracts so that they are hitting those required WIOA components. Their unit is reaching out to active employers to developing internships for the students for the summertime.

DDDS has been pushing for positions for Pathways for Employment. They are almost fully staffed in New Castle County, along with additional positions (one in each county). New Castle County received a lot of recruitments from Pathways for Employment. There has been outreach in Kent and Sussex County school districts. An issue with the other counties was always the

employment changes in the school. Their focus right now is that they are not funding anyone not DDDS funded.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Lloyd motioned to adjourn the meeting. Cindy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Rivard
Administrative Specialist